

Merchant and Nuuanu Streets --
Royal Saloon
901 Nuuanu St. & 2 Merchant St.
Honolulu
Honolulu County
Hawaii

HABS No. HI-55 B

HABS
HI,
2-HONLV,
18-B-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20013

HABS
HI,
2-HONLU,
18-B-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

MERCHANT AND NUUANU STREETS COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS
ROYAL SALOON

HABS NO. HI-55 B

Location: 901 Nuuanu Street and 2 Merchant Street, City and County of
Honolulu, Hawaii
Zone 2, Sec. 1, Plat 02, Tax Key #35

Present Owner: Shamrock
(Property Manager)
24 Merchant Street
Honolulu, Hawaii

Present Occupant
and Use: Jameson's Harbor Grill Restaurant

Significance: The Royal Saloon's site has been occupied by a social
establishment since the 1870s. In this capacity, buildings
on this site served the waterfront community and its
visitors until the early twentieth century. In more recent
years it has again served as a social establishment.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1890. The Royal Saloon was constructed in
1890, following an 1889 widening of Merchant Street. [Thomas
Thrum's Annual, 1890.]
2. Architect: Not known.
3. Original and subsequent owners:
1890 W. C. Peacock built the original corner structure.
1925 sold to Mercantile Printing Co.
1944 sold to the Ed Towse Trust Estate
1961 sold to Stephen and Harriet Sawyer
1974 sold to Lin Cumitos and Associates
1977 sold to Merchant Square Associates
1986 sold to Roscommon Square
[Thomas Thrum's Annual, 1890, Tax Records, Building Permits, and
Historic Hawaii File, "Merchant Square" publicity packet.]

4. Original plans and construction: As originally constructed, the building apparently extended the full 61'-6" on Merchant Street, but only 39'-8" on Nuuanu St. The Merchant St. facade is divided visually into two sections with separate entrances, including a canted entrance on the corner.

The 1900 fire insurance map depicts two businesses in existence on the site, one the Royal Saloon and the other merely marked "Saloon." However, the building is indicated as being one whole which was occupied by the two establishments side by side within the structure. An awning extended from the Nuuanu facade around to the Merchant Street facade unbroken.

6. Alterations and additions: A rear section with a 27' front on Nuuanu Street, on a previously empty lot, was added between 1914 and 1925, as indicated by corrections in the Sanborn maps of those dates. It is not known what changes the structure underwent with the occupation by Mercantile Printing Co. in 1925. It was renovated in 1977 by Anderson/Reinhardt, Architects, for use as a restaurant. The restaurant kitchen is in the Nuuanu Street addition, the original Merchant Street structure functioning as the dining area. [Building permit 2-1-02-35, #'s 121594, 2102, 26284, 32609, 28261, 136210, 79875.]

B. Historical Context:

This structure occupies a site which had hosted a combination hotel and saloon since 1873, when a W. L. Green was granted a retail spirit license. Fire maps dating from 1879 indicate that there were actually two structures on the site, possibly one being the saloon and one the storage facility for the premises. In 1884 the saloon was sold, then sold again between that year and 1886, when a W. C. Peacock owned it. [Honolulu Business Directory, 1889.] In its early years, the saloon was particularly popular with sailors, the Sailors' Home being next door. [See Yokohama Specie Bank Report, HABS No. HI-55 D.] Peacock's saloon was demolished for the widening of Merchant Street which took place in 1889. He temporarily moved his establishment to the Mossman Building at the corner of King and Nuuanu Streets.

After the street was widened, Peacock constructed a new saloon in 1890, on the site of his earlier structure. [Thomas Thrum's Annual, 1890.]

The Royal Saloon closed its business in 1916. The building subsequently housed office and retail businesses, and was returned to restaurant usage in the 1970s.

Report prepared by Laura S. Alderman, Project Historian.

For background information on this downtown neighborhood, see HABS No. HI-55.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This small, one-story brick building is successful in anchoring the corner of Nuuanu and Merchant streets due to the position of its entrance on the corner and to the repetition of motifs on both facades. While there is variety in bay sizes, the consistency of details unifies the two facades. A small, very plain addition is located to the side on Nuuanu Street.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: This building measures 61'-6" along Merchant Street and 39'-8" along Nuuanu Street. Northeast (mauka direction) of the building is an addition measuring 27'-6" along Nuuanu Street and 61'-6" in depth. There are three bays on each street facade and a chamfered entrance corner. The building stands approximately 23' high.
2. Foundations: Some brick is visible at the ground line on the exterior although the foundation is not visible for inspection.
3. Walls: Exterior walls are of exposed brick highlighted with white stuccoed pilasters, cornice and balustrade. A portion of the upper wall surface is stuccoed. The street facade of the addition is entirely stuccoed. The rear portion of the addition is of concrete block.

The three bays along Nuuanu Street are uniform in dimension (approximately 10' bays). Along Merchant Street the first two bays from the corner measure approximately 14' while the third is 24' wide. The corner entrance bay measures 11'-6" on the diagonal. All bays, except the wide one, have single openings. The wide bay is subdivided into three smaller bays (each 8' wide) with a single opening in each. The addition has two unequal bays articulated by plain stucco pilasters.

4. Structural system, framing: There are brick bearing walls; the roof structure is not visible but there appears to be a truss system spanning from the Merchant Street facade (SW) to the NE wall. The floor has 2" x 12" joists, 16" oc. The floor is raised off the ground although the space is non-accessible. The addition appears to be a brick bearing wall with joists.

5. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: The principal entrance doorway is located at the corner of the building. There is one step up to the recessed entry door set within a segmentally arched opening. The arch has a molded stone keystone with four stone voussoirs alternating with brick voussoirs. The jambs of the recess are paneled. The paired doors are of wood with glass panel. Over these doors is a segmental-arched transom.

A second entrance is situated in the center of the large Merchant Street bay. There are two steps up to the recessed entry. The doorway has a segmental-arched opening similar to that on the corner.

The middle bay of the Nuuanu Street facade has what appears to have been a doorway but is now a window unit. A concrete stoop is still in place and there is a wood panel beneath the window. The same details are found in another opening on Merchant Street (second from the corner), indicating the possibility of another converted opening. The Nuuanu Street addition has a doorway in its makai bay. The door is wood with glass panel and has a transom set in rectangular opening. Along the areaway to the NE of the addition is a broad flat arched opening.

- b. Windows: Windows have two-over-two-light double-hung wood sash. They are set within segmental-arched openings with voussoirs similar to those for the doorways. Windows are located in the first and third bays of the Nuuanu Street facade, in the first bay and to either side of the large bay on Merchant Street. The addition has two windows in its mauka bay, which are fixed and divided into six panes (three over three). Along the alleyway are a small segmentally arched window and a small opening with steel lintel (later opening). The concrete portion of the addition has miscellaneous openings.

6. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: On the main building there is a hip and gable roof set behind a parapet wall. The hip is at the Nuuanu end with the ridge extending SE and terminating in a parapet wall at the opposite property line. The roof surface is rolled composition roofing. The addition roof is flat with slope for drainage.

- b. Cornice, eaves, parapets: Parapets articulated with recessed panels containing balusters surround the entire building. There is a brick cap course. The corner of the building has a pediment rising above the parapet and the wide Merchant Street bay has a low, broad pediment. The cornice below the parapet contains a triglyph motif. The parapet of the addition is unarticulated.

C. Description of Interior:

The interior was been fully renovated. A certain amount of what appears to be historic fabric is visible but this may be reused material. The entire decor is Victorian in spirit.

- 1. Floor plan: While the exterior presents the image of two or three distinct parts, the interior has been brought together as a single restaurant/bar space. The main corner unit (three bays on Nuuanu Street and two bays on Merchant Street) comprises the main dining room. The third (wide) bay on Merchant Street comprises the bar area. The addition on Nuuanu Street serves as a private dining room and is connected internally to the main dining room. Toilets and kitchen are located in the NE rear corner of the building.

There is a partial basement, approximately 17' x 21', along the front of the wide bay unit on Merchant Street. It appears to be partially excavated from the rock.

- 2. Stairways: None. There is a hatch with ladder stair to the basement from within the bar.
- 3. Ceiling and wall finish: The main and private dining rooms have plaster ceilings. The bar has a molded cross beam ceiling with twelve large recessed panels having tongue-and-groove board insets. This ceiling appears to be new. The dining room walls have exposed brick above a plywood wainscot on the exterior walls. Other walls are paneled or wallpapered over plaster.
- 4. Floors: The floors have carpet over wood; some small areas have parquet floor. The basement has no floor surface.
- 5. Openings: All interior openings date from interior renovation. Major openings have been cut into dividing walls to unify the spaces.

6. Decorative features and trim: The segmental-arched windows have molded wood trim with corner blocks which highlight the exposed brick walls. These may be original or reproductions. The segmental relieving arches above the windows are exposed. The bar space has molded wood pilasters relating to the ceiling beams. The main dining room has booths along the exterior walls and in the center of the space.

Throughout the restaurant are ceiling fan-and-light units.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The building is located in a tight urban setting on the edge of the Chinatown Historic District and the Merchant Street National Register district. It sits at the Nuuanu and Merchant Street property lines. To the NE on Nuuanu Street is a 19'-6" wide service alley. To the SE there is a 1' space between this and the adjacent Waterhouse building. The sidewalk is of 14" square granite paving slabs. The building occupies the entire site. There is no landscaping and no outbuildings.

In this description, local designation is given for orientation. "Mauka" means mountain direction, "Makai" means sea direction, "Diamond Head" means in the direction of Diamond Head crater, "Ewa" means in the direction of the town of Ewa (opposite Diamond Head direction).

Report prepared by Robert C. Giebner, Project Supervisor.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Early Views:

Bishop Museum Photograph Collection:

Files: "Geography. Oahu. Honolulu Streets. Merchant S. pre-1900", "Geography. Oahu. Honolulu Streets. Merchant S. 1900-", "Geography. Oahu. Honolulu Streets. Nuuanu Avenue. Downtown Area."

Album 12, Page 30, "C.B. Mus. 104, Gartley 196. Merchant Street, Honolulu, ca. 1890?"

Baker, Ray Jerome, Scenes of Old Hawaii. #31190.

Hawaii State Archives Files: "EPIDEMICS- Bubonic Plague (10)",
"BLDGS, BUS: N-R".

B. Primary and Unpublished Sources:

Hawaii Directories, 1880-1918. Hawaii State Archives and Bishop Museum.

Honolulu Business Directory 1889. Bishop Museum Library.

Maps: Lion Fire Insurance Company, 1879. Bishop Museum Map Collection.

B. F. Dillingham Fire Insurance Company for Board of Fire Underwriters of Honolulu, 1900, and 1906 corrected to 1911.

Sanborn Map Company, 1914 uncorrected (Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.), 1914 corrected to 1925, 1927 uncorrected, and 1927 corrected to 1951. Bishop Museum Map Collection and Hawaii State Archives.

Tax Records, Tax Assessor's office, 842 Bethel Street, Honolulu, Hawaii. Records for "Zone 2, Sec. 1, Plat 02, #35."

Building Permits, Municipal Building, Honolulu, Hawaii. #'s 121594, 2102, 26284, 32609, 28261, 136210, 79875.

Hawaii State Archives "Historic Buildings Task Force" File #TMK 2-1-02-35. University of Hawaii architecture student's 1966 report on the Royal Saloon.

Historic Hawaii Foundation File "Merchant Square". Publicity packet.

C. Secondary and Published Sources:

Honolulu Star Bulletin
8-26-1975

Honolulu Advertiser
6-13-1986

Historic Hawaii News
5-1979
8-1986

Scott, Edward B. The Saga of the Sandwich Islands, vol. I. Crystal Bay, Lake Tahoe, Nev.: The Sierra-Tahoe Publishing Co., 1968.

Thrum, Thomas. Hawaiian Almanac and Annual. Honolulu: Black & Auld Printers, 1890, p. 100 and 1899, p.92.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was jointly sponsored by First American Title Co., Historic Hawaii Foundation, and the National Park Service. Recorded under the direction of Kenneth L. Anderson, Chief of HABS, and Alison K. Hoagland, HABS Historian, the project was completed during the summer of 1987 at the Honolulu field office. Project supervisor was Robert C. Giebner (University of Arizona); project historian was Laura S. Alderman (Washington, D.C.); architectural foreman was J. Scott Anderson (Washington, D.C.); and architectural technicians were Coy E. Burney (University of Maryland), Kenneth R. Imoehl (University of Arizona), and Michel A. van Ackere (Brown University).